


T H E  C L E V E L A N D M U S E U M O F A R T

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An exhibition of photographs by William Current focusing on the work of California's pioneers of modern architecture, Greene & Greene, opens November 30, 1975 and will continue through January 10, 1976 at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Organized by the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, the exhibition documents photographically 14 superb houses designed by Greene & Greene between 1902 and the years just before the First World War. A group of floor plans, elevations, and working drawings supplements the photographs -- many of houses now altered or no longer in existence.

For the Cleveland showing, furniture designed by Charles Greene for the 1911 house of Miss Cordelia Culbertson, illustrated in the exhibition, will be included. Lent anonymously from a Cleveland collection, the furniture -- a nest of tables and glass-fronted writing desk -- typifies the spirit of Greene & Greene's work: it is original, unpretentious, and beautifully crafted.

The history of the firm dates from 1894 when the brothers Charles and Henry Greene settled in Pasadena, California to open an office for the practice of architecture. Both were scarcely 25 years old.

Greene & Greene launched its career in the field of residential architecture and was an immediate success. Its early houses -- in the then current Queen Anne and Neo-colonial styles -- reveal a sure hand and competent eye,

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but give little hint of the artistry and originality to come.

Yet in less than a decade -- about the same time that Frank Lloyd Wright was developing his "Prairie" houses in the midwest -- the Greenes had moved away from "conventional" styles, and evolved an architectural vocabulary distinctively their own. Now known as the "California Bungalow" style, it was to influence the domestic architecture of America well into the 1920s.

The bungalow concept, though most closely associated with the Greenes, did not originate with them. And while there was great stylistic variation in its execution, broadly speaking the bungalow denoted a certain kind of environment -- honest and unpretentious, yet gracious -- where exterior, interior, furnishings, and setting all blended together.

But it was the Greenes, with their extraordinary gift for design and innate feeling for materials -- particularly wood -- who were to articulate the concept most fully, making of their homes a work of art as well as a practical, functional environment.

Perhaps the most stunning example of their achievement is the 1908 Pasadena home of David Gamble. Situated on spacious landscaped grounds, the house shows their imprint throughout. Everything -- from light fixtures to stairway landings, dish cabinets, tables, chairs, and even doors to the garage -- has been wrought with care and artistry.

All are scrupulously detailed in Current's photographs, 58 of which are devoted to the Gamble house alone.

While homes such as those for the Gamble family and other of Greene & Greene's clients could never be duplicated, their influence went beyond Pasadena and California to become a national style. In virtually every

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American neighborhood developed in the teens and twenties of the century there can be found houses styled with open truss porches, low spreading roofs, shingles, and exposed rafter ends which draw their inspiration from Greene & Greene.

The exhibition is accompanied by a handsomely illustrated catalogue prepared by the photographer and his wife Karen Current. Both the publication and the exhibition have been assisted by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago, Illinois.

"Greene & Greene, Architects" has been installed in the special exhibitions gallery on the Museum's second floor. There is no admission charge.

A pair of gallery talks have been planned in conjunction with the showing. These will be held from 1:30-2:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 31 and on Sunday, January 4.

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For additional information or photographs, please contact Frances Stamper, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; (216) 421-7340.